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ABSTRACT

Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA) is a curriculum tool for use in the preservice preparation of reading teachers. The questioning procedure in RMA is designed to encourage consideration of reading as a meaning-getting process rather than as a process of seeking accuracy or perfection. The technique, which involves the teachers in analyzing a reader's miscues (differences between what is in the text and what is actually read), is based on three underlying assumptions: (1) miscues are a natural part of reading, (2) all readers make miscues, and (3) reading is a single process, whether it is done orally or silently. The RMA procedure involves taperecording a passage to be read aloud by a child, which is then analyzed. Working in small groups during analysis, preservice teachers stop the tape whenever any one of them identifies a miscue. The group attempts to answer a series of questions regarding each miscue. These questions encourage the preservice teachers to focus on the reader's attempts to arrive at meaning and on the reader's sense of language while reading. (Information on obtaining a diskette with an Apple computer adaptation of this technique is included.) (HTH)

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Retrospective Miscue Analysis as a Tool in Teacher Preparation in Reading

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Whenever prospective teachers enter university classes that focus on reading and reading instruction, they bring with them a great amount of experience both as readers and as students in classes where reading has been taught. Through such experiences they have developed and maintain certain attitudes and beliefs about reading and reading instruction. Yet our current understanding of reading and reading instruction has generally not been reflected in the educational experiences of many students. Whereas letter identification, word identification, accuracy and speed have often been of areas of major focus in reading instruction, research in the last few years has led to a focus on meaning and comprehension at all levels of instruction (e.g. see "Becoming a Nation of Readers," National Institute of Education, May, 1985). As a result, the problem faced by many instructors in college level courses on reading and reading instruction involves providing new experiences relating to reading for those who might someday teach reading to others.

Certainly, such experiences can be provided through activities and exercises performed in a class setting. Those experiences form the instructional basis for many courses on reading instruction conducted

in this country. Yet most of those activities are often not designed to encourage students to discuss the nature of the reading process, to challenge or rethink their own ideas about reading and reading instruction, to discuss their ideas openly with other students to encourage further exploration, or to actually conduct an analysis of the reading behavior of a child.

This paper presents an approach to encouraging the analysis, discussion and reconsideration of the reading process by students in introductory level classes in reading instruction. This approach is utilized and has been utilized at the School of Education of the University of South Dakota. This paper presents a curriculum tool for use in the preservice preparation of teachers for teaching reading.

This instructional approach, termed Retrospective Miscue Analysis (RMA), has been developed by utilizing a questioning procedure based on miscue analysis (Goodman & Burke, 1972). Miscue analysis has served as the basis for a theory of reading which considers meaning as the primary goal of reading with accuracy a consideration of much less importance (Goodman, 1967). As a result, the questioning procedure in RMA is designed to encourage consideration of reading as a meaning-getting process rather than as a process of

seeking accuracy or perfection. RMA involves students in analyzing a reader's miscues (differences between what is in the text and what is actually read (Goodman, 1973)). It is important to note that this technique is based on three underlying assumptions:

1) Miscues are a natural part of reading.
2) All readers make miscues.
3) Reading is one single process whether it is used orally or silently - meaning is the desired outcome and the entire process is focussed on reaching that meaning.

RMA has been found to be of particular use with two different groups of people. The first group is formed by students in secondary schools or adults who view themselves as poor readers because they do not read with complete accuracy. Members of this group are actually relatively effective readers but have unrealistic expectations of themselves as readers. With this group RMA is used to help these individuals come to recognize and appreciate their own competence as a readers. The second group (which is primary concern in this paper) is formed by teachers, both preservice and inservice, who need to understand reading better in order to provide effective reading instruction to children in school.

The same general procedures for gathering a reading sample of oral reading for miscue analysis are followed in RMA. The reader, usually a child if RMA is used for teacher training, reads aloud a passage which is recorded on a tape recorder. The passage which is read should have an identifiable beginning, middle and end and should be difficult enough to be likely to result in some miscues during the oral reading while not being so difficult as to overwhelm the reader. The reader is provided no help or assistance during this oral reading. When the reader is finished reading the passage, (s)he retells as much of the passage as can be recalled. The retelling is unaided. This tape is then used for the purpose of analysis.

Analysis is conducted with the students in small groups of two to five members. Small groups are used to encourage discussion when progressing through the analysis. The members of the RMA group listen to the tape of oral reading. Members of the group stop the tape whenever any one of them identifies a miscue. After a possible miscue has been identified, the tape is rewound past the point of the miscue and replayed until a consensus is reached on whether a miscue actually occurred and, if one did, what it was. In some instances a consensus is not reached and, in that

case, that miscue is skipped and analysis continues from that point.

Miller and Woodley (1983) have presented the questions to be utilized during the analysis:

1) Does it (the miscue) sound like language?
2) Does it make sense?
3) Does it fit the passage?

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4) Does it look like what is in the passage?
5) Does it sound like what is in the passage?

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6) Did the reader self-correct?
7) Should the reader have self-corrected?
8) Why do you think the reader made the miscue?

Questions #1, #2 and #3 are asked for all miscues identified. This questioning strategy is designed to encourage the teacher education students to focus on the reader's attempts to arrive at meaning and on the reader's sense of language while reading. Only if the answer to each of the first questions is no are the next two questions asked. Questions #4 and #5 focus attention on graphic and sound similarities between the miscue and what was in the text. This questioning

strategy is used to emphasize the focus meaning as the central concern of reading and to de-emphasize the role of graphic and sound similarities. If the answer to any of the first three questions is yes, then Questions #4 and #5 are omitted and questioning resumes with Question #6. Questions #6 and #7 are asked for all miscues identified. At first it seems to many prospective teachers that all miscues should be corrected because, after all, they are not "right." Yet the presence of a deviation from the text does not always disrupt the reader's efforts to reach meaning. The presence of Question #7 encourages students to reconsider and re-evaluate that position. The last question (#8) seems to be most productive in terms of encouraging students to consider and eventually come to better understand what happens during reading. At first the responses often reflect little understanding of what happens when we read. After members of the group answer this question several times, discussion often leads to deeper appreciation and understanding of the reader's competence in using language while reading.

Obviously not all of the questions can be answered by considering only the miscue itself but can be answered only by considering the context in which the

miscue occurred. This nature of the questioning procedure helps students develop a sense of the role of context in reading. Miscues, if considered in isolation, sometimes seem absurd. Yet when the context is considered they may seem appropriate and plausible.

Woodley (1985) has presented modifications to this technique which make it particularly useful in dealing with large classes at the university level. Woodley presents a program listing for using this technique with an Apple II, IIc or IIe microcomputer and describes an approach to utilizing the program with students working in small groups. This modification allows students the opportunity to discuss the miscues and formulate their own opinions regarding the nature and causes of miscues. The program allows small groups of students, working independently of the class as a whole and outside of the constraints of class time, to examine the reading behavior of children. When using this program, the analysis is guided by the computer which also keeps track of the responses given. The program is designed to yield a printout of the students' responses as they progress through the analysis and provides a concluding section where the students receive a summary of their responses. Following that, the students are provided the

opportunity to bring a close to the activity by completing a series of sentence stems which focus on what was learned through the activity.*

For many students this procedure, whether presented with a microcomputer or as a small group activity within the class, provides the first opportunity to systematically analyze and come to understand the reading of one individual.

Language growth seems to be at a maximum when the individuals are provided a risk-free environment -- a setting where the students are accepted as they are while also encouraged to reach out and explore new ideas, checkout language alternatives and develop new hypotheses. Such an environment seems to also be important for reconsidering and re-examining our ideas

* NOTE: A diskette with a copy of the program for Apple II series microcomputers is available free of charge. Send a blank double density disk and a self-stamped, self-addressed 6" X 8" (or larger) envelope to:

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about language and the way in which it should be taught. This is the case with RMA. It is important for the instructor to avoid an attitude that there is any "right" or "wrong" answer to any question or group of the questions utilized. On the contrary, it is important for the instructor to accept the student's responses while asking thought provoking questions, prodding the students into further consideration, and challenging their ideas to have them reconsidered and refined.

When RMA is used as an in c. , small group experience, the instructor should first demonstrate the procedure to the entire class before breaking into small groups. Such modeling serves to help students develop an understanding of what constitutes a miscue and demonstrates the questioning procedures to be used. Second, the instructor should move throughout the class and serve to stimulate discussion between and among the students. It is through group discussion and consideration of the reader's miscues that the procedure has its greatest benefits.

When RMA is conducted with a microcomputer, the instructor should first discuss miscues and allow students to develop a conceptual framework for identifying them. An important benefit of this

modification of RMA is that it allows students to analyze more than one reader during the course of one semester to reflect their growing understanding of reading. Such multiple analyses are virtually restricted by the factor of time when RMA is used during normal class periods. It is during a second or third analysis that students often feel comfortable with the format of the procedure and develop a confident attitude about what each question means. This allows for more in-depth consideration of the oral reading.

Whichever approach to RMA is employed, the procedure offers students in teacher education programs the opportunity to analyze and come to better understand the nature of the reading process. This is intended to lead to the ultimate goal of courses on reading instruction: to improve reading instruction in the schools at all levels.

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